

Message Text

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10

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-09 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-14 USIA-12

AID-20 IO-12 RSR-01 OMB-01 /113 W
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R 280520 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9262

USDEL FRANCE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 5065

E. O. 11652 GDS

TAGS PINT PINS MILI VS

SUBJECT: NGUYEN BA CAN ON VIETNAM' S SILENT MAJORITY

FOLLOWING MSG REC FROM AMCONSUL CAN THO ACTION EMBASSY SAIGON
INFO AMCONSUL BIEN HOA AMCONSUL NHA TRANG ON MAR 27 REPEATED
FOR YOUR INFO:

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAN THO 0093

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, VS

SUBJECT: NGUYEN BA CAN ON VIETNAM' S SILENT MAJORITY

1. AFTER HEARING PRESIDENT THIEU' S FARMERS DAY SPEECH IN CAN
THO, MARCH 26, (SEE CAN THO 0092) AND OBSERVING THE
PRESIDENT POLITICKING ENTHUSIASTICALLY AMONG THE THROUNG OF
FARMERS, LOWER HOUSE CHAIRMAN NGUYEN BA CAN TOLD CONGEN OFFOCER
THAT IN HIS OPINION THE " SILENT MAJORITY" OF VIETNAMESE SUPPORTED
THE PRESIDENT. CAN, WHO REPRESENTS DINH TUONG PROVINCE, SAID THAT
MANY POLITICIANS IN SAIGON THINK THE AVERAGE CITIZEN OPPOSES THIEU.
THE MAJORITY OF VIETNAMESE, HOWEVER, ARE NOT IN THE CITIES, BUT IN
THE COUNTRYSIDE, WHERE THIEU IS STRONGEST. CAN COMPARED THIEU' S
GRASS ROOTS CONSTITUENCY TO PRESIDENT NIXON' S OWN " SILENT
MAJORITY".

2. REPRESENTATIVE CAN AGREED WITH THIEU' S PLAN, ENUNCIATED IN
THE FARMERS DAY SPEECH, TO DECENTRALIZE THE GOVERNMENT, AN
IDEA HE SAID WAS BORROWED FROM NIXON. CAN NOTED THE
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GOVERNMENT IS NOW SO CUMBERSOME THAT IT OBSTRUCTS DEVELOPMENT.

3. ON THE ISSUE OF CORRUPTION, WHICH THIEU ALSO PROMISED TO DEAL WITH, CAN SIAD THE PRESIDENT WILL SOON ANNOUNCE THE DISMISSAL OF THREE PROVINCE CHIEFS-- IN PHU BON, PHU YEN AND PHUOC TUY. THE SHIFTS MAY COME BEFORE THIEU LEAVES FOR THE US, OR SHORTLY AFTERWARD.

ACCORDING TO CAN, THE GVN WILL ANNOUNCE THAT THE PROVINCE CHIEFS ARE

BEING RELIEVED FOR CORRUPTION, RATHER THAN FOR THE CUSTOMARY FACE-SAVING REASONS. CAN SIAD THAT THE PRESIDENT WILL ONLY NEED TO FIRE A FEW SUCH OFFICERS IN THAT FASHION TO MAKE THE OTHERS REFORM.

4. ASKED ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF ELECTIONS WITH COMMUNIST PARTICIPATION, CAN DOUBTED THEY WOULD BE HELD IN THE NEAR FUTURE. IN VIEW OF COMMUNIST VIOLATIONS OF THE CEASE FIRE, AND THEIR BEHAVIOR IN THE PARIS TALKS WITH THE GVN, HE THINKS THE COMMUNISTS HAVE NO INTENTION TO AGREE TO ELECTIONS, OR TO ABIDE BY THE PARIS AGREEMENT. "PEACE", HE SAID, "IS NOT IN THEIR INTERESTS; IT IS IN OUR INTERESTS. WITH PEACE, WE WOULD DEVELOP THE ECONOMY OF THE COUNTRY, WE WOULD BECOME

STRONGER AND THE COMMUNISTS WOULD LOSE."

5. CAN WAS NOT CONCERNED ABOUT THE MORALE OF GVN SOLDIERS AND CIVIL SERVANTS SAGGING AS PEACE HOPES WANED. HE SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT

WOULD HAVE TO CONTINUE TO COUNSEL VIGILANCE AND PATIENCE. IT TOOK FOUR YEARS OF NEGOTIATIONS, HE RECALLED, TO ARRIVE AT THE PARIS AGREEMENT LAST JANUARY; THE PEOPLE MUST UNDERSTAND THAT MAKING THE

PEACE A REALITY MAY REQUIRE A LONG TIME.

WISNER

BUNKER

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